

Title of project: IPM Update List-serves for Greenhouse and Christmas Tree Growers

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Abstract: Growers' requests for a system of 'pest alerts' led to the development of the Christmas Tree and Greenhouse IPM Updates email list-serves. The approximately weekly emails include information on disease, insect, and weed pest management in a series of short items with links for additional information. The updates serve as a means for two-way information exchange between IPM staff and growers and industry representatives.

Justification: Growers requested a means of being alerted to insect and disease outbreaks, or the conditions under which they could develop. Extension's reaction to late blight – with on-line updates on where the disease had been identified – were the basis of the request. There are few ornamental pests for which the necessary research base, modeling, and data collection exist for prediction similar to late blight. However, chrysanthemum white rust is a regulated disease for which environmental cues exist and for which official records of incidence are collected. The IPM Update system was discussed initially as a means of alerting greenhouse growers to the potential for chrysanthemum white rust to develop.

Objectives: To create a method to rapidly alert growers to new or ongoing pest management issues

Procedures:

1. Develop a framework for the alerts

E-mail was determined to be the easiest method of efficiently reaching a large number of growers quickly. Because growers are busy, a short but frequent format was chosen. Updates are approximately a 'computer screen' page long made up of short items – 1-3 sentences long. Each item has highlighted key words and is associated with a URL link or attachment to provide additional information. Updates come out approximately once per week, based on the amount of information available.

There are 2 update lists – Greenhouse IPM Update, which goes primarily to greenhouse ornamental growers and associated industry people, but also includes information on greenhouse vegetable production – and Christmas Tree IPM Update, which is aimed at Christmas tree growers but includes information for nursery growers and on diversification crops like pumpkins and hops.

2. Determine what information can or should be included, with potential sources

The intent of the updates is to extend pest oriented information, with an emphasis on IPM information in the broad sense. Announcements of educational events, particularly those organized by or including IPM staff, are included. Surveys that relate to Ornamental IPM may be included. Requests for information – whether growers have seen a particular pest, for example – are occasionally included, as are photographs for 'Can you identify this?' questions. The tone is intended to make reading the updates enjoyable.

Information is gleaned from as many reliable sources as possible. In some cases, questions from growers initiate a topic. Discussions with colleagues provide topics and information on topics that come from other sources.

On-line sources of information from which items are taken include:

Newsletters

- Michigan State University Extension News
- University of Massachusetts New England Greenhouse Update
- University of Florida IFAS Pest Alert
- Northeast Greenhouse Notes
- Rutgers Plant and Pest Advisory
- UMass Green Info
- Greenhouse IPM Report (MD)
- Small Farm Quarterly
- VegEdge
- Capital Ag and Hort e-news

Trade journals

- American Nurseryman
- Acres Online (GrowerTalks)
- Greenhouse Grower's Benchrunner
- Greenhouse Canada
- Inside Grower

Listserves

- CCE Diagnostic
- AERGC
- OrnaEnt
- Nursery Crop University Listserve
- PA Christmas Tree Scouting Report

3. Market the alerts to increase the number of members

The alerts are only as valuable as the number of people who receive them. Continuing to add members is important and can be difficult. We market the updates:

Through IPM In-depth and other educational programs that we put on or where we speak

Through other newsletters and organizations – for example, Christmas Tree Farmers' Association of New York and NYS Flower Industries

Through organizations – CCE Ulster County provides their lists of registered growers

Through word of mouth - Christmas tree growers who are on the list forward the emails to Christmas tree growers in Massachusetts and Ontario

Members can leave the list whenever they wish by contacting me.

Results:

Greenhouse IPM update

375 members

41 Greenhouse IPM updates from 1.19.13 to 12.12.13

Responses to questions in update – 10

Questions from growers receiving update – 7

- Comments from growers receiving update – 6
- Changes that growers receiving update have made (and reported on)
 - Pesticide timing
 - Beneficial ID
- Information on microscopes for greenhouse
- Fungus gnat control

Christmas tree IPM Update

- over 150 members

- 36 Christmas tree updates between 2.1.13 and 12.12.13

- Responses to questions in update – 17

- Questions from growers receiving update – 9

- Comments from growers receiving update – 3

- Changes that growers receiving update have made (and reported on)

- Pesticide timing

- Disease id

- Insect id

- New resources used

Future directions

- Survey members for impacts from updates

- Use a blog format to archive and index the information in the updates

- Continue to expand the membership

Implications

The updates serve as an excellent method of maintaining two-way communication between NYS IPM and growers and industry representatives. They also create a conversation between CCE educators and us as the information feeds into several CCE newsletters, and vice versa. Also, following up topic suggestions with Cornell faculty and other resources helps us learn about research that can feed into our programs.

We have not yet surveyed members for instances where information they learned has affected their pest management methods. However, we have gotten some unsolicited comments (as noted above), which suggest that the updates are having an impact.